

“The WSWS has not only commented on the struggles of the working class it has been an active participant in them”

Jerry White
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The WSWS is publishing the speeches delivered by leading members of the ICFI and contributors to the WSWS at the online rally held October 25 to welcome the relaunching of the WSWS that began with the postings of October 2, 2020. The remarks below were given by Jerry White, a member of the Socialist Equality Party (US) national committee and a leading writer on the WSWS.

As other speakers have explained, when the *World Socialist Web Site* was initially launched in 1998 the International Committee of the Fourth International set out as its task the revival of a socialist culture in the international working class, the preparation of the leadership for the next stage of the capitalist crisis and resurgence of the class struggle and the practical organizer of the of the world proletariat to achieve its revolutionary tasks.

We are relaunching the WSWS amid the greatest breakdown of the world capitalist system, with more than a million dead and an economic and social catastrophe not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The mass slaughter in the European battlefields of World War I was not ended until the entry of the working class. The same is true in the present when the working class once again faces issues of life and death in the face of the pandemic and the criminal policies of the ruling class. The period will see an unprecedented entry of the global working class into historic struggles and the WSWS and the ICFI will play an ever more decisive role in the direction of the class struggle and its development into socialist transformation of the world.

The late 1980s and the decade of 1990s saw the final betrayal and transformation of all the old nationally based labor organizations, from Stalinist bureaucracies in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China, to the European and Australian social democratic parties and bourgeois national movements in the oppressed countries, to the AFL-CIO in the United States, which destroyed what had once been the American labor movement and fully embraced the corporatist program of labor-management collusion to suppress the class struggle.

The unprecedented globalization of capitalist production drove the final nail into all of these organizations, which were based on the outmoded nation-state system. The ICFI insisted that the next stage of development of the class struggle would take the form of a rebellion against the old labor bureaucracies and increasingly a globally coordinated struggle by the working class against the

transnational corporations.

This theoretically guided conception has been borne out, and for nearly 23 years, the WSWS has emerged as the invaluable instrument of the international working class, providing workers with a voice for its daily struggles, the organizational means to unite across borders and the lessons of the history of the class struggle and socialist movement, which are necessary to transform its spontaneous struggles into a politically conscious struggle for workers power and world socialism.

There is no other web site that has such an orientation to and deep relationship with the struggles of the working class. In the course of that last two decades, we have produced thousands of articles on the conditions and struggles of workers. In recent months, some of our most widely read articles concern issues facing the working class.

These include one article on the gutting of art and music programs in a Massachusetts school district which had 690,000 readers. Another on the mass layoffs of teachers being planned across the US was read 98,000 times. A letter from a frontline nurse at a UK hospital had 96,000 readers.

And what we write has had a direct impact on the course of the class struggle. In mid-March, just days after more than quarter million workers read the WSWS article, “Shutdown the auto industry to stop the spread of the coronavirus” and our report on job actions by Fiat Chrysler workers in Windsor, Canada, a wave of wildcat strikes broke out at factories in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, which forced the closure of the North American auto industry and lockdowns across the country.

We often get reports from workers informing us that the influence of the WSWS in the factories and other workplaces is far wider than we realize. But it is a fact that WSWS and our digital newsletters have become the center of opposition by autoworkers, teachers, Amazon workers, transit workers, and others against the homicidal “herd immunity” policy of the capitalist governments around the world.

During the pandemic, we have held online calls uniting transit workers in London, Berlin and New York City, among autoworkers in the US, Canada and Mexico, and teachers from the US, Australia, Britain, Brazil and Argentina. Autoworkers, educators, tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka and others have taken up our call for the formation of rank-and-file safety

committees, independent of the unions, to counterpose the struggle for life by workers to the conspiracy of death by the corporations, unions and corporate-controlled parties.

The “factory exposures” conducted by the Russian social democrats in the mid-1890s, Lenin said, evoked a “veritable passion” among workers to “get into print,” with the revolutionary party literally flooded with correspondences from the factories and workplaces. Today, workers email the WSW.

But the fight for socialist consciousness, Lenin insisted and the ICFI insists today, requires the all-around political education of the working class, on the international scope of its struggles and the political lessons of its historical experiences. This demonstrates that the creation a world without war, inequality and oppression is only possible if the working class takes political and economic power into its own hands and establishes world socialism.

For the working class to conduct and unify its struggles, an implacable fight must be waged against the nationalist poison and militarism promoted by the unions and their pseudo-left supporters, which seek to divide workers along national, ethnic, linguistic and racial lines. The WSW has proudly fought to unite the international working class on the basis of the program of world socialist revolution, drawing to the attention of the most advanced sections of workers the critical struggles over the last two decades and drawing out the strategic lessons from these experiences.

This includes the Indonesia upheavals in 1998; the worldwide struggles against the US imperialism’s 2003 invasion of Iraq; the global financial crash of 2008-09 and its aftermath; the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions in 2011 and Wisconsin protests the same year; the Marikana Massacre in South Africa and the frameup of the Maruti Suzuki workers in India in 2012 and the anti-austerity protests in Greece and Spain in 2015-16, which were betrayed by Syriza and Podemos.

It also includes the global wave of strikes and protests in 2018-19: the Yellow Vests in France; the teacher strikes that started in West Virginia and other US states that spread internationally; the revolt of the Mexican maquiladora workers; the US General Motors strike and the heroic stand of GM workers in Silao, Mexico; the mass protests in Chile, Puerto Rico, Iraq; and most recently the global protests against police killings in the US, Nigeria and other countries and the struggles against unsafe conditions during the pandemic.

The WSW has not only commented on these struggles, it has been an active participant in them. All of these strategic experiences have been analyzed and their lessons are much more accessible for our readers to study in the section of the WSW titled “Global Class Struggle.”

Bitter experience has demonstrated that the trade unions cannot be reformed, despite the claims of various pseudo-left organizations. All such efforts have only resulted in tragedy for the working class and lucrative positions for affluent layers of the upper middle class.

Perhaps the clearest example of the anti-working-class character of the unions was the 2012 massacre of 41 platinum miners in South Africa, which was overseen by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Congress of South Africa Trade

Unions (COSATU), whose leader, the billionaire Cyril Ramaphosa, is now the president of one of the most unequal countries in the world. But the transformation of the unions into direct instruments of the ruling class is a universal process. This is underscored by the revelations about the multi-million-dollar corporate payoffs to the United Auto Workers in exchange for its help in slashing wages and destroying the eight-hour day for autoworkers.

This analysis has allowed the ICFI to understand the role the unions play and will play. That is why in the fight against the pandemic and the historic economic, social and political crisis in the US and internationally, we are aiding workers in developing rank-and-file factory, workplace and neighborhood committees, independent of the unions. And we are connecting the immediate demands of workers—for health and safety and against austerity—with a broader political perspective.

We call for the development of a movement for a political general strike against any effort by Trump to incite right-wing violence, overturn the outcome of the vote and steal the election. This fight, however, cannot be politically subordinated to the maneuvers of Biden and the Democrats who are opposed to any genuine fight against fascism, militarism and social inequality.

In the coming weeks and months, we must develop the WSW and its coverage, pay the closest attention to the conditions of workers, which are covered up by the media and ignored by the capitalist politicians, and the growth of resistance by the working class. In all of this work, the basic aim is to develop a socialist leadership in the working class. In doing this, the ICFI and WSW will play an ever more decisive role in the development and direction of the global class struggle.

At the turn of the last century, Lenin said the All-Russian Marxist newspaper, guided by an international socialist perspective, would be the scaffolding for the building of a revolutionary movement. That movement took power in October 1917. Today, the international working class has an immense weapon—the WSW—to coordinate the ever more complex and challenging work of the ICFI, educate the most advanced workers and youth, unite their international struggles and provide the necessary perspective and leadership for the final overthrow of capitalism and victory of world socialism.



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